

Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

December 1 – 31, 2007

The following is a summary of Mexican wolf reintroduction project activities in Arizona on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNF) and in New Mexico on the Apache National Forest (ANF) and Gila National Forest (GNF), collectively known as the Blue Range Wolf Reintroduction Area (BRWRA). Additional information can be obtained by calling (928) 339-4329 or toll free at 888-459-9653, or by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department Web site at <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf> or by visiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf>. Past updates may be viewed on either Web site, or interested parties may sign up to receive this update electronically by visiting <http://www.azgfd.gov/signup>. This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose. The reintroduction project is a multi-agency cooperative effort among the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), USDA Forest Service (USFS), USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA APHIS WS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT) located on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR). Other entities cooperate through an Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) that meets quarterly in Arizona and/or New Mexico, including private individuals, organizations and tribes.

To view the weekly wolf telemetry flight location information or the wolf distribution map,* please visit <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf>. On the home page, go to the “Wolf Location Information” heading on the right side of the page near the top and scroll to the specific location information you seek.

* Beginning in January 2008, the monthly color distribution map will be available on a quarterly basis (January, April, July and October), and the black and white printer-friendly version will no longer be available. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) recommended this change to the Adaptive Management Oversight Committee (AMOC), which the AMOC approved, because of time issues involved in producing both maps on a monthly basis.

Please report any wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations to: (928) 339-4329 or toll free at 888-459-9653. To report incidents of take or harassment of wolves, please call the AGFD 24-hour dispatch (Operation Game Thief) at 800-352-0700.

Numbering System: Mexican wolves are given an identification number recorded in an official studbook that tracks their history. Capital letters (M = Male, F = Female) preceding the number indicate adult animals 18 months or older. Lower case letters (m = male, f = female) indicate wolves younger than 18 months or pups. The capital letter “A” preceding the letter and number indicate alpha wolves.

Definitions: For the purposes of the Monthly Update, a “wolf pack” is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established home range. Project personnel recognize that wolves without radio telemetry collars may also form packs. If the IFT confirms that wolves are associating with each other and are resident within the same home range, they will be referenced as a pack.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

At the end of December, the collared population consisted of 21 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 10 packs and five single wolves. This number is different from last month because the IFT removed Aspen pack AF667, F1046, f1105 and an uncollared female pup, assigned studbook number f1108 upon capture, per a USFWS Removal Order. Other uncollared wolves are known to be associating with wolves having radio collars, and others are separate from known packs.

At the end of 2006, there were an estimated 59 wolves throughout the BRWRA in New Mexico and Arizona. Of those, 46 were born in the wild.

SEASONAL NEWS

The IFT will conduct its official 2007 end-of-year Mexican wolf population survey January 17 through January 24. The results from this survey will be provided in the January 2008 monthly update.

IN ARIZONA:

Bluestem Pack (collared AM806, AF521 and F1042)

During December, the IFT located the pack in the north and central portion of the ASNF.

Hawks Nest Pack (collared AM619 and uncollared AF486)

Throughout December, the IFT located AM619 in its traditional home range in the north-central portion of the ASNF.

Rim Pack (collared AF858 and f1104)

Throughout December, the IFT located the pack and M1107 within the Rim pack traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF. The IFT located f1104 separate from AF858 and M1107. The necropsy results for Rim pack F1048, found dead west of Hannagan Meadow, Arizona, on October 21, 2007, revealed that the wolf died as a result of severe chronic diffuse pleuritis. Pleuritis is an inflammation of the tissues lining the thorax, heart and lungs.

M1107 (collared)

Throughout December, the IFT located M1107 with AF858 of the Rim pack in the central portion of the ASNF.

ON THE FAIR:

Bacho Pack (collared AM990)

Throughout December, the IFT located AM990 on the FAIR.

Lofer Pack (collared AF1056)

Throughout December, the IFT located AF1056 on the FAIR.

Paradise Pack (collared AM795 and M1044)

Genetic testing shows that M795 sired M1044 and M1045, thus it will now be referred to as the alpha male of this pack. During the majority of December, the IFT located AM795 and M1044 on the ASNF. The IFT last located M1045 with the Paradise pack on the November 19 telemetry flight. The IFT located the wolf in New Mexico in December, and it is now designated as a single wolf. On the December 17 telemetry flight, the IFT located AM795 approximately five miles outside of the BRWRA boundary.

IN NEW MEXICO:**Aspen Pack (collared AF667, F1046, f1105 and uncollared f1108)**

On December 4, the IFT removed, per a USFWS Removal Order, AF667, F1046, f1105 and an uncollared female pup, assigned studbook number f1108, to the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility in New Mexico.

Dark Canyon Pack (collared M992 and F923)

Throughout December, the IFT located the pack in the southwest-central portion of the GNF.

Luna Pack (collared AM583 and uncollared AF562)

Throughout December, the IFT located AM583 in the southwest-central portion of the GNF.

Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871 and AF861)

Throughout December, the IFT located the pack in the northeastern portion of the Gila Wilderness.

San Mateo Pack (collared AF903)

On the December 5 telemetry flight, the IFT located AF903 in the east-central portion of the ASNF in Arizona. On the December 13 and 17 telemetry flight, the IFT located AF903 in New Mexico in the northwestern portion of the GNF.

M1038 (collared)

During December, the IFT located M1038 in the northwestern portion of the ANF.

M1039 (collared)

On the December 4, 13 and 17 telemetry flights, the IFT located M1039 over 70 miles north of the BRWRA boundary in the Cibola National Forest in New Mexico.

F1040 (collared)

During December, the IFT was not able to locate F1040 during the telemetry flights.

M1045 (collared)

The IFT last located M1045 with the Paradise pack in Arizona on the November 19 telemetry flight. The IFT located the wolf in mid-December in New Mexico in the southeastern portion of the ANF near the Sand Flat Road. The IFT next located it northwest of Pelona Mountain, then, on the December 31 telemetry flight, located it north of Eagle Peak in the northern portion of the

GNF.

INCIDENTS

On December 27, the IFT received a report of a dead cow in Apache County, Arizona. The IFT investigation showed the cause of death to be wolf-related. Based on all available evidence, the IFT assigned the depredation incident to Paradise pack AM795 and one uncollared wolf associated with AM795. This is the first depredation incident for AM795 and the uncollared wolf associated with AM795 in 365 days.

CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

On December 4, the IFT captured Aspen pack AF667, F1046, f1105 and an uncollared pup f1108, per a USFWS Removal Order, and transported the pack members to the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

On December 3, Shannon Barber-Meyer, AGFD Field Team Leader, conducted a public meeting in Alpine, Arizona, to discuss the possible translocation of M1008 and F1028 at a suitable site in Arizona in spring 2008.

On December 10, Dan Groebner spoke to 10 members of Boy Scout Troop 209, providing a wolf project status update.

On December 17, Shawna Nelson spoke to 10 members of the Alpine Volunteer Fire Department, providing a wolf project status update and training on wolf and coyote identification in the field.

During December, the IFT made phone contact with USFS district personnel and approximately 60 landowners and livestock operators residing within the BRWRA boundaries in Arizona and New Mexico to inform them of the end-of-year population survey, which will occur in the latter part of January, where the IFT plans to use a helicopter to count and possibly capture animals. The IFT also requested permission of landowners to land on private property, if necessary.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

On December 6, Shannon Barber-Meyer submitted her resignation letter to take a position with the World Wildlife Fund. Her last day was January 1, 2008.

On December 14, Melissa Woolf, biologist with the Turner Endangered Species Fund, left the wolf project after 10 years to enter graduate school and pursue a teaching position.

On December 14, Lauren Ross, USFWS volunteer, completed her temporary position with the wolf project. She took a position with the California Wolf Center.

On December 17, Jeff Dolphin began his position as an AGFD wolf technician.

On December 17, Beth Orning-Tschampl began her position as an AGFD wolf technician.

On December 18, Allie Hunter, USFWS volunteer, completed her temporary position with the wolf project.

REWARDS OFFERED

The USFWS is offering a reward of up to \$10,000, the AGFD Operation Game Thief is offering a reward of up to \$1,000, and the NMDGF is offering a reward of up to \$500 for information leading to the conviction of the individual(s) responsible for the shooting deaths of Mexican wolves. A variety of non-governmental organizations and private individuals have pledged an additional \$33,000 for a total reward amount of up to \$44,500, depending on the information provided.

Individuals with information they believe may be helpful are urged to call one of the following agencies: USFWS special agents in Mesa, AZ, at (480) 967-7900, in Alpine, AZ, at (928) 339-4232, or in Albuquerque, NM, at (505) 346-7828; the WMAT at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; AGFD Operation Game Thief at 1-800-352-0700; or NMDGF Operation Game Thief at 1-800-432-4263. Killing a Mexican wolf is a violation of the Federal Endangered Species Act, and can result in criminal penalties of up to \$50,000 and/or not more than one year in jail, and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000.